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Project: **IS-111**

OFFICE OF REPORTS AND ESTIMATES

Project Initiation Memorandum

Date: **9 May 1950**

To: **D/RE**

From: Publications Division, Projects Planning

Subject: **Belgian parliamentary elections**

Statement of Project: 25X1A

Origin: **Internal** [REDACTED]

Problem: **To estimate the composition of the Belgian parliament as the result of the elections of 4 June.**

Scope:

Graphics (if any):

Form: **Memorandum (orig & 2)**

Draft due in D/Pub: **12 May 1950**

Responsible Division: **D/RE**

Dissemination deadline
(if any)

Internal Coordination: **--**

Departmental Responsibilities: **None**

Classification to be no higher than: **Secret**

Recommended Dissemination: **Requester only**

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Copies: D/WE
AD/ORE

Project: *P-114*

25X1A

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1. Belgium - Pol. & govt. - Elections June 1950 .

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50785

5 May 1950

MEMORANDUM FOR: D/Pub, ORE

25X1A

ATTENTION :

SUBJECT : Belgian Parliamentary Elections

REFERENCE :

Case

25X1A

1. It is requested that this office be furnished an ORE evaluation of the composition of the Belgian parliament following the elections of 4 June 1950.

2. It would be appreciated if a priority status would be given this request as the earlier the material is available to OPC the more useful it will be.

25X1A

3. This memorandum confirms conversation of 4 May 1950 between [REDACTED] of this office.

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ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

INSTRUCTIONS: Officer designations (see separate sheet) should be used in the "To" column. Under each comment a line should be drawn across sheet and each comment numbered to correspond with the number in the "To" column. Each officer should initial (check mark insufficient) before further routing. This Record and Routing Sheet should be returned to Registry.

FROM:

ISB

5 May 1950

ACCESSION NO.

C-23597

DATE RECEIVED IN S. A.

5 May

TO	ROOM NO.	DATE		OFFICER'S INITIALS	COMMENTS
		RECEIVED	FORWARDED		
1. D/Pub, ORE ATTN: [REDACTED]					<i>Carbon copy to D/USE, 9 May 50</i>
2. [REDACTED] 25X1A					
3.					
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TRANSMITT' SLIP		
1050 DATE		
TO: <i>D. Hub</i>		
BUILDING	ROOM NO.	
REMARKS: <i>Lay on</i>		
FROM: <i>W. J. ...</i>		
BUILDING	ROOM NO.	EXTENSION
FORM NO. 36-8 SEP 1948		

Case

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15 May 1950

ESTIMATE OF THE PROBABLE COMPOSITION OF THE BELGIAN PARLIAMENT FOLLOWING
THE 4 JUNE 1950 ELECTIONS

Conclusion: The Christian Social Party (PSC) probably will obtain an absolute majority in both houses of Parliament in the 4 June elections. The Liberal Party is expected to lose to the PSC, and possibly to splinter groups, but the gains of the Catholics may also be minimized by the election of splinter group candidates. The combined strength of the Socialist and Communist Parties' representation probably will remain about the same, although the Communists may lose one or two seats to the Socialists.

Discussion: The election campaign will be waged largely over the issue of King Leopold's status, and this estimate of changes in the representation of the various parties in Parliament is based on the belief that the electorate will be greatly influenced by this issue in choosing candidates. The position of the PSC is strong, because the "popular consultation" in March 1950 on whether King Leopold should return to the throne indicated that many voters who supported the Liberal Party in 1949 favored the King's return. In the national elections a year ago the PSC obtained an absolute majority in the Senate but lacked two seats for a majority in the Chamber of Deputies. The fact that the Liberal gains in the last elections were made largely in the Flemish area, where support for Leopold is strongest, indicates that the Liberal Party probably will lose out among the Flemish to Catholic candidates. The issue on which the Liberals seem

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to have made their greatest gains in 1949—freedom from Government economic controls—is no longer as controversial an issue, and the Catholics probably have proved adequately within the past year that they strongly favor a "free economy." The PSC labor support also seems assured, particularly if economic conditions remain favorable and unemployment does not rise to any important extent.

The factor that may prevent an appreciable gain in Catholic parliamentary representation is the strengthening of the Flemish splinter groups, composed largely of extreme rightists and nationalists. These groups will receive no more than several parliamentary seats, if that, but they may in some cases, (as occurred in 1949) so weaken support for some PSC candidates that the Liberal Party will be able to obtain the seats. This drain on PSC strength probably will not be important enough, however, to prevent it from obtaining an absolute majority.

The Liberal Party, as indicated above, is expected to lose some of the large gains it made in 1949. Its opposition to Leopold will lose it some Flemish support, and its seeming willingness to compromise on the issue may cause defection of Walloon supporters to the Socialists or independent Walloon groups. Joint Socialist and Liberal support may be given to one or two candidates in the Luxembourg and Limburg Provinces, but it is unlikely that any substantial inroads will be made on the strong Catholic position in these areas.

There probably will be little change in the parliamentary strength of the Socialist Party, although a gain of one or two seats from the Communists is

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possible. The severe losses the Communist Party sustained in 1949 reduced it about to the "hard core" and almost to its prewar parliamentary strength.

An approximate estimate of the minimum and maximum seats it is believed each party could receive in the Chamber of Deputies out of a total of 212 is as follows:

<u>Party</u>	<u>June 1949</u>	<u>June 1950</u>	
		Minimum	Maximum
Christian Social	105	107	110
Socialist	66	66	68
Liberal	29	24	28
Communist	12	10	12
Splinter Groups	0	0	3

The distribution of the 175 Senate seats may not reflect as accurately the popular vote, because only a portion of the Senators are elected by proportional representation, and the remainder are chosen by the Provincial Councils and by cooptation. The PSC, with a majority of nine seats, will at least maintain this lead and probably will increase it. Because Catholic control of the Senate seems assumed, the Senate elections are secondary to those of the Chamber of Deputies. As in the Chamber of Deputies, the Liberals probably will lose a few seats and the Socialists and Communists maintain approximately their same strength. The present distribution of the Senate seats ^{is} ~~are~~ as follows:

PSC	92
Socialist	53
Liberal	24
Communist	6

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